

environmental issues. Unfortunately, in the final hours of conference negotiations, efforts were made to add a variety of provisions that would have undermined environmental protection, and that were never debated or voted on during House or Senate consideration of the bill. Most such provisions were ultimately removed, although certain objectionable riders remain in the bill. For example, one rider could open the way for the use of motorized vehicles for portages in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area wilderness in Minnesota. A second rider provides funding for the consideration of a new transportation route into the heart of the Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska. I view the addition of these kinds of riders as an abuse of the legislative process. I call on the Congress to renounce this practice in the future and pursue environmental legislation through the regular authorization process with open debate and appropriate public scrutiny.

I am very pleased that H.R. 2400 continues the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program contained in previous statutes. This program has provided an opportunity for small, disadvantaged businesses to compete in highway and transit contracting undertaken with Federal funding. The Act also continues vital labor protections for America's transportation and construction workers.

The Act establishes a strategic planning process to determine national research and technology priorities and provides substantial funding for new and improved transportation technologies. It protects underground utilities, such as pipelines and fiber-optic cables, that transport critical energy supplies and information necessary to keep America's economy strong.

I am troubled by the many hundreds of special interest highway projects funded in this Act. I would have preferred a "cleaner" bill, with funds provided to States for projects of their choosing. Project selection decisions should be a State responsibility.

I would also have preferred a stronger program to support implementation of a key Federal responsibility—control of our Nation's borders. My Administration will work with the Congress to secure additional funds, within existing highway funding totals, to ensure that the Government has the technology

and infrastructure in place to expedite cross-border traffic while continuing our vital efforts to stop contraband, including illegal drugs, from entering our country.

I am pleased that H.R. 2400 adopts the low student loan interest rate that the Vice President proposed in February on behalf of our Administration. I have serious concerns, however, about the subsidies that the Act would force taxpayers to pay to lenders on top of the payments made by borrowers. It is critical that we move toward a system that relies on market pressures, not political pressures, in setting subsidies for lenders and intermediaries. My Administration is committed to working with the Congress on a long-term, mutually acceptable solution that moves toward a market-based mechanism for determining lender returns.

Regrettably and unintentionally, H.R. 2400 contains a number of technical errors related to veterans benefits and important highway safety programs. I urge the Congress to complete action on and send me promptly the House-passed technical corrections bill, H.R. 3978, which addresses these concerns.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century represents a significant achievement in our efforts to meet our transportation needs in the next century. I commend the Congress for its diligent, bipartisan efforts to resolve differences and to pass this important legislation.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
June 9, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 2400, approved June 9, was assigned Public Law No. 105-178.

Statement on the House of Representatives Democratic Child Care Proposal

June 9, 1998

The balanced budget I submitted to Congress includes an ambitious initiative to make child care better, safer, and more affordable. America's working families and our Nation's children deserve our attention and action on this critical issue. Today House Democrats

are unveiling an important proposal—sponsored by over 100 Representatives—to address the child care needs of working families. Like my child care initiative, this new package significantly increases child care subsidies for poor children, provides greater tax relief to help low- and middle-income families pay for child care, creates a tax credit for businesses that provide child care to their employees, increases after-school opportunities for children, promotes early learning, and improves child care quality.

I believe that by continuing to work together and by taking the best proposals from both sides of the aisle, we can achieve legislation that helps Americans fulfill their responsibilities as workers, and even more importantly, their responsibilities as parents. I welcome this important contribution from House Democrats, and I urge all Members of Congress to come together this year to improve child care for our Nation's working families.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting a Report on the
National Emergency With Respect to
Weapons of Mass Destruction**

June 9, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 204 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1703(c)) and section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1641(c)), I transmit herewith a 6-month report on the national emergency declared by Executive Order 12938 of November 14, 1994, in response to the threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons ("weapons of mass destruction") and of the means of delivering such weapons.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
June 9, 1998.

**Message to the Senate Transmitting
the Inter-American Convention
Against the Illicit Manufacturing of
and Trafficking in Firearms,
Ammunition, Explosives, and Other
Related Materials With
Documentation**

June 9, 1998

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (the "Convention"), adopted at the Special Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) at Washington on November 13, 1997. The Convention was signed by the United States and 28 other OAS Member States on November 14, 1997, at the OAS Headquarters in Washington. So far, 31 States have signed the Convention and one (Belize) has ratified it. In addition, for the information of the Senate, I transmit the report of the Department of State with respect to the Convention.

The Convention is the first multilateral treaty of its kind in the world. The provisions of the Convention are explained in the accompanying report of the Department of State. The Convention should be an effective tool to assist in the hemispheric effort to combat the illicit manufacturing and trafficking in firearms, ammunition, explosives, and other related materials, and could also enhance the law enforcement efforts of the States Parties in other areas, given the links that often exist between those offenses and organized criminal activity, such as drug trafficking and terrorism.

The Convention provides for a broad range of cooperation, including extradition, mutual legal assistance, technical assistance, and exchanges of information, experiences, and training, in relation to the offenses covered under the treaty. The Convention also imposes on the Parties an obligation to criminalize the offenses set forth in the treaty if